THE
RECONSTRUCTIONIST

DEDICATED TO THE ADVANCEMENT OF JUDAISM AS A RELIGIOUS CIVILIZATION, TO THE UPBUILDING OF ISRAEL'S ANCIENT HOMELAND, AND TO THE FURTHERANCE OF UNIVERSAL FREEDOM, JUSTICE AND PEACE.

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EDITORIALS

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DO YOU CALL THAT RELIGION?

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by Samuel Margoshes

THE TANGIBLE BACKGROUND OF HEBREW LIFE

by Joshua Starr

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EDITORIALS

Freedom and Justice

THE recent celebration of Passover bids us once again examine the story of Jewish emancipation in order to draw therefrom the relevant lessons of tradition for the struggle against tyranny and oppression in our day. Perhaps the most remarkable fact in the entire story is that Moses' role grew from that of redeemer to that of law giver. In the early stages of his leadership Moses seems to have been concerned essentially with emancipation. He was anxious to ease the burden of his enslaved people, to bring them into freedom. Difficult as the task of emancipation must have been, Moses soon took upon himself, however, an additional task—that of providing his emancipated people with an ideal system of law.

In assuming the work of the law-giver, Moses established an important truth regarding the relationship of a state of freedom to the nature of the social order. Freedom must be fortified by social justice. For a group of freemen will ultimately refuse to tolerate injustice; and the perpetrators of injustice, to maintain their power, will have to strike at their victims' freedom. Freedom, in other words, can exist only in a just society.

Recent history has illustrated the import of this truth. The prophets of modern democracy were, as Moses in his day, the emancipators of their people. They brought untold sacrifices to break the shackles of feudalism, which had enslaved mankind for centuries. They established these precious rights of the individual. But this new emancipation was not accompanied by any code of social legislation that would protect the weak from the strong and establish justice. On the contrary, selfishness was raised to a philosophy. Every man was told to pursue his own personal ends and the hindmost were assigned to the devil. What was the result? Instead of resigning themselves to their fate, the exploited masses of the world organized into parties of revolt. True to form, the perpetrators of injustice, faced with the danger of losing power, then struck out against their victims' freedom. What then is the background of that modern menace to human freedom, the rise of fascism? Is it not an effort to perpetuate the social and economic status quo by abrogating those rights that might enable the victims to organize effective resistance?

The lesson of the Passover tradition then is clear. Whoever wants to be an emancipator must also be a social reformer, a law-giver. In fighting to preserve our democratic liberties against the tidal wave of fascism, it is not enough to argue that fascism means tyranny and that democracy affords the blessings of personal freedom. Our work must be extended to establishing the kind of social order where freedom can exist securely. An ideal system of legislation—social reforms that will

protect the weak; the abolition of child labor; adequate unemployment insurance and old-age pensions, minimum wage and maximum profit scales, and ultimately, the socialization of all wealth and the liquidation of class distinctions flowing from the ownership of property, these will all have to precede the establishment of a genuinely free society. For in the long run, there can be no freedom without justice.

Religion and Social Action

WHAT are the religious leaders of our day doing to effect changes in our society, to rid it of injustice, oppression and corruption? The question constitutes the crux of every discussion on the function of religion in contemporary life. The radicals generally issue blanket condemnations of religion, accusing it of condoning the status quo. The defenders of religion generally quote from the Prophets. But until very recently, the precise figures have not been known. Now they are open for inspection. The American Sociological Review, the official organ of the American Sociological Society, in its February issue, reports the results of a nation-wide survey of the opinions of 100,000 clergymen taken from 22 different denominations.

The survey was undertaken by the Religion and Labor Foundation in January 1935. Only 4700 religious leaders sent in replies, 97 per cent of whom were Protestants. It may be of interest to note that only 50 out of 22,000 Baptists in the South filled out the questionnaire. The 47 questions asked covered a wide range of social problems, and the answers are painfully illuminating.

Seventy-eight per cent of the clergymen were in favor of old-age pensions; 79 per cent advocated the child labor amendment. Only 53 per cent approved the public ownership of public utilities; 76 per cent favored unemployment insurance. Touching upon civil liberties, 81 per cent declared that they would preach or write for the defense of these liberties; only 54 per cent said that they would support action demanding the retrial of an accused discriminated against in the courts. In industrial disputes, 71 per cent would be willing to get the facts and acquaint their people with them. Only 25 per cent would recommend the use of union labor on church projects.

No more than 72 per cent stated that they would do anything to abolish Negro lynching. In rural communities, cooperatives would be supported by 46 per cent of the men who replied. Fifty per cent would join a national organization dedicated to the advancement of social justice; 45 per cent of them would organize church groups for that purpose. A special tabulation was made of 2000 answers dealing with activities within the religious institutions themselves, and they reveal that only 28.6 per cent of the leaders conducted forums, classes or symposia on social problems.

In summarizing the results, Professor Jerome Davis, of Yale University, remarks that the figures seem to "show that the Protestant ministers to some extent tend to veer away from action in proportion as it is against accepted patterns of behavior involving conflict with the staus quo or with property owner. Sociologically this was what would be expected." In other words, the religious leaders act just like everybody else, except that "the intentions of the minister for social justice are higher than the average of his community." And unfortunately, this difference misleads those who identify themselves with religious institutions into believing that their membership in those institutions enlists them in the ranks of social protestants.

This is the most serious indictment of religion that we have as yet encountered. It bears out the charge that religion is an opiate of the masses. But we insist that this is not the inherent character of religion, that religion plays that role today only because it is not functioning normally. Religion is undoubtedly a powerful

force in the world; everyone, including the anti-religionists, admit that. Since religion must be reckoned with, why should not the forces of light capture it for their purpose? Why permit the forces of darkness to take it by default and to prostitute it to evil ends?

Some of the religious leaders have already accepted this challenge, and have issued pronouncements and statements, and have passed resolutions; but it is not difficult to perceive that these have done very little good. Since 1908, the world has been treated to resolutions and platforms by the progressive religionists; Prof. Harry Ward, in his book, "The New Social Order," prints page after page of these statements; but observe the reaction of the clergy, after nearly thirty years of this procedure. The method is obviously inadequate. The ministers and rabbis of our country have simply not been taught properly. They have not received in their seminaries the kind of sociological training necessary to qualify them to cope with problems of economic justice. As a result, the graduates are prepared to do nothing more than to reiterate their endorsement of the Ten Commandments.

If religion is to function as a social force, the ministers must get a thorough orientation in the social sciences. In Jewish life, in the past, the rabbi studied Jewish law. At a time when the Torah was accepted as the guide to Jewish living, in all its aspects, the rabbi, expert in the knowledge of the Torah, acted as the judge and mentor, realizing justice in his community on the basis of the only just code accepted by Jews. Today, the rabbi must be educated in the science of human relations; he must study social *ethics.*

The Union Theological Seminary, in New York, under the influence of a man like Ward, has actually led the way to the creation of the new type of religious leader. Reinhold Neibuhr and others testify to the effectiveness of this approach. It is time that other seminaries, Jewish and Christian, revise their curricula to meet these new demands. When that is done, a second questionnaire may yield very different results.

Do You Call That Religion?

FRANKLY, we are in a quandary. We are faced with an article called "Modern Trends in Judaism," by Rabbi Leo Jung, published in the Mizrahi Jubilee Publication, in which we are attacked. That section of the article directed against us is called "Jewish Humanism or 'Judaism Without God' ", and it is so chockfull of slander and misrepresentation that we don't know whether to laugh or to cry, whether to ridicule its malapropistic language, its ignorance, and its arrogance, or to get good and angry and call names.

Suppose we begin by just stating the facts, calmly. Rabbi Jung heads this section, as we have said, "Jewish Humanism or 'Judaism Without God.' " Now, why the quotation marks around "Judaism Without God"? Does he mean to give the impression that the Reconstructionists have adopted this slogan for Jewish life? Whom does he quote? Himself?

Then he proceeds to assert that our movement is "the first attempt to secularize Judaism, to redefine it, not as a revealed religion"; that we aim at "the propagation of a secular nationalism, detached not only from the Jewish religion but, in some measure at least, also from the theistic interpretation of the universe." Before we disillusion Rabbi Jung about our attitude toward religion, we should like merely to point out that even if we were what he says we are, we would still not represent the first attempt to secularize Judaism. The secular nationalist movement is about thirty years old. Where has Rabbi Jung been all these years?

Now, we are accused of detaching ourselves from Jewish religion, and toward the end of the section, the reader is informed that "It (modern humanism of the Jewish type) just has *given up* every reference to God." At this point it is difficult to remain calm. Has Rabbi Jung seen a copy of "Judaism As A Civiliza-

tion?" From page 303-409, there is a section entitled, "God. The Development of the Jewish Religion," occupying exactly one-third of the entire material devoted to a description of the Reconstructionist philosophy. On page 305, we read, "Of all civilizations, Judaism can least afford to omit religion." Religion has loomed so large in the entire career of the Jewish people, that its elimination would leave Judaism impoverished. . . . If the glory of a civilization consists in the uniqueness of its contributions to human culture, then religion was, and will remain, the glory of the Jewish civilization. Take religion out and Judaism becomes an empty shell. Not by the furthest stretch of the imagination could a secularized life be identified with the spiritual heritage which has shaped the Jewish people into a unique entity. The very fact that Jews are compelled to re-emphasize their status as a nation places upon them the obligation to be a religious nation, for it is only through religion that Jews can recapture the sense of world unity and the spiritual oneness of mankind." But, as everyone knows, it is a handicap to read what the opponent writes if one is planning to attack him.

We are next accused of misleading the "old generation by (our) compromising perpetuation of Jewish ritual—which is suffered as an expression of nationalist folkways, as a means to a nationalistic end." Could we perhaps interest Rabbi Jung in a chapter entitled "Jewish Folkways" from the book we mentioned before? There we read (p. 433), "In the religious folkways, the main purpose is to emphasize the cosmic relationship implied in religious experience. Institutions like the Sabbath, the festivals, and worship are intended for that purpose." We distinguish very definitely between cultural and religious folkways; but Rabbi Jung wouldn't know about that.

We are then accused of standing out alone as the only group in Jewish life that questions the Mosaic origin of the Bible. What strange bedfellows does this business of attacking us make! Rabbi Jung falls into the arms of the Reformists to humiliate us. He tells his readers that he virtually forgives them for everything—for discarding the dietary laws, for reducing the "Sabbath celebration to a one hour service in English plus a Sunday morning affair with Cantorial titillations introducing book review sermons" — everything, because they still sing the *Shema* when they take the Torah out and thereby "express (their) conviction that 'This is the Torah which Moses placed in the hands of Israel by the command of God," while we merely lift the Torah as an "8th century or 4th century manifestation of the Jewish genius." Is Rabbi Jung trying to tell his readers that the Reformist group do not accept Biblical criticism? Hasn't he read what the Reformists have written, either?

Finally, Rabbi Jung tells the world that we reject Jewish law; this, he says, we have in common with Reformism. In this instance, he happens to be correct about Reformism, but again, inexcusably wrong about us. On page 26 of "Judaism As A Civilization," the author says, *"The elimination of the civil code from Jewish life has, in fact, administered as severe a blow to Judaism as the destruction of the Jewish commonwealth."* (Italics his.) In fact, on p. 157, the author goes on to say, *"We are amazed to discover that the most important elements of Jewish law are as obsolete in Neo-Orthodoxy as they are in Reformism."* We hope that Rabbi Jung will not be too startled to find that the tables are turned on the group which he represents.

The case rests; we won't dwell upon the fact that he mistranslates a verse to his purpose, or that he concludes that we stand revealed as the "worst form" of assimilationists. We have no illusions about this editorial. It will not help change Rabbi Jung's mind one bit—if he sees it. But we do believe that it may help to forewarn our readers against this type of assault. They are not likely to find the truth about us in books like the Mizrahi Jubilee Publication.

The Community Council As Planned By The American Jewish Congress

By SAMUEL MARGOSHES*

IN THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST of January 24, 1936, Mr. Israel Rappaport makes another contribution to the literature on the need of building local Jewish Community Councils, their functions and their form of organization. Of the many plans on this subject, suggested from various sources, that of Mr. Rappaport bears the closest resemblance to the plan proposed by the American Jewish Congress, which in the form of a "Constitution of Community Councils" has been circulated among the numerous branches of the American Jewish Congress throughout the country during the last few months. The Congress plan, however, differs from Mr. Rappaport's, both in its fundamental approach to the idea and in the scope of the functions to be adopted by the Community Councils.

I

The American Jewish Congress regards the new Community Councils as a natural historic development of Jewish life in this country. The creation of such Councils is to be another step in the metamorphosis of the American Jewish *population,* into the American Jewish *Community.*

Various writers on the subject have referred to the attempt and failure to establish a Kehillah in New York City back in 1908. Whatever might have been the reasons for that failure, there was one additional and most important reason: the untimeliness of the plan. In the year 1908, the great Jewish migration into this country was only about a quarter of a century old, and still rapidly progressing. The immigrant of yesterday, still unsettled economically and much more uncertain socially and culturally, was still very far from regarding himself as a member of an integrated Jewish Community. The breach between the two classes of American Jews, that of the well-to-do settlers of the middle of the 19th century, and the mass of immigrants of the '80s and '90s and the first decade of the 20th century, was too great to permit the thought of a centralized Jewish body, controlling, to some degree, the activities of both classes. The immigrants of yesterday looked for their economic and spiritual security in their immediate and most decisive environment, that of the union, the lodge, the *landsmanschaft* and the congregation. All in all, these great masses of immigrants were parts of a growing Jewish population, which in its internal structure and psychology was merely a population in flux and not a people.

It required the dynamic shake-up of the World War and the vast amount of relief work, that fused the different elements in the establishment of the Joint Distribution Committee; the Balfour Declaration which forced the recognition of the Palestine movement upon its opponents and the constantly recurring catastrophes in Jewish life in Europe, to bring closer cooperation between the Jewish "Mayflower" groups hailing from Western Europe, and the millions of Eastern European Jews. In the interim, considerable numbers from among the immigrants of yesterday achieved material positions which brought them closer—at least in philanthropy and similar activities—to the wealthy groups of old settlers. The great mass of the people had grown into the life of their new country and become integrated not only legally, but spiritually as well. The rigid immigration quota guarded that psychological process of civic en-

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trenchment, and legally closed the process of growth by influx from without. From then on it was to be a natural growth from within.

Thus, it was on a fairly settled and in some respects quite unified Jewish group of several millions that the horror of Hitlerism descended. It was not only another catastrophe that for the moment, or for a longer period, united the various groups in sympathy and action as in the Kishinev case or in the War relief. This time it was the horrible mirror reflecting the Jewish fate of all times. It registered with terrific impact upon the instinctive self-consciousness of the Jewish mind. It opened its eyes to the potential dangers of anti-Semitism in this country, even before Nazi propaganda made itself manifest. It tore off the veil of silence that hung over economic and social discrimination here and there. It brutally undermined the belief in the possibility of total Jewish absorption in the non-Jewish milieu. It called for defense, and self-realization, and self-organization which make defense possible. It evoked the latent will to act and live as a people.

Were it not for Hitlerism, this process of re-awakening would have remained devious and long drawn out. It was due historically. Our natural development as a group in this country was leading unmistakably toward this self-realization and the inner drive and will for self-assertion. Hitlerism quickened the pace of this process and brought the awakening at an earlier date. This historical development served as a natural stimulus for the several movements in the direction of Community Councils. The idea was in the air. It was sensed by those who regard the Community Councils as an instrument of building a Jewish people, as well as by those who want to use it as an instrument of maintaining for the Jewish people, the status of a Jewish population. Therein lies the difference between the two mainstreams of the movement for Community Councils.

II

From several writers who dealt with the problem of Community Councils, the suggestion has come that the Federation of Jewish Charities or the Welfare Fund be made the structural skeleton for these Councils. This suggestion is repeated in the article by Mr. Rappaport with a provision that the Federation "modify" its program so as to employ the concept of a democratically organized and representative Community organ.

The American Jewish Congress has no quarrel with philanthropy as such. However, it proceeds with the building of its Community Councils from the premise that the philanthropic federations are unfit to serve as the nuclei of such Councils, because: first of all, the present structure of the Federations and democratically representative organs are mutually self-exclusive and secondly, the concept of Jewishness underlying present-day Jewish philanthropy is the very opposite of the concept of Jewishness upon which self-conscious Jewish life must be built.

The brand of Jewishness prevailing in the leading philanthropic circles is that of the Reformist creed, which according to Professor Mordecai M. Kaplan in his "Judaism As A Civilization," made the surrender of the idea of Jews as a nation one of its basic principles. With this element, charity, instead of being one of many Jewish functions, became the chief function that conveniently carries with it absolution from almost all other Jewish bonds and responsibilities. War, upheavals and repeated Jewish catastrophes have prevented the adherents of this creed from enjoying peace in embracing this chief Jewish function. These catastrophes have forced them to act and to appear as Jews in many more fields of Jewish endeavor. Some of the philanthropic leaders may have been brought nearer to the National Jewish way of thinking. On the whole, however, the spirit dominating philanthropic leadership is that of crude Reformism in its primitive stages of self-

negation—the spirit of assimilation and cultural absorption.

The inner development of American Jewry during the last decades took a direction contrary to that negative spirit. The very self-realization that produced the idea of Community Councils is based upon the understanding that the various groups comprising the American Jewish population are sections of one people, historically, culturally and spiritually. The urge for building these Councils is the instinctive desire for self-preservation as a historic entity. Making the Federation the basis of the Community Councils means placing the leadership of these Councils into the hands of those who regard the establishment of the self-conscious integrated Jewish life a danger and a misfortune.

For that reason the American Jewish Congress considers the movement for Community Councils on the part of the philanthropic Federations, not a parallel, but an opposition movement aiming at the obstruction and prevention of the natural historic process. It regards this movement on the part of the Federations as a new attempt to retain power for those elements which have consistently been both assimilationist and undemocratic in the conduct of Jewish affairs.

As to the democratic spirit of the Welfare Federations, which is essential in the structure of the Community Councils, the report of the National Council of Jewish Federation and Welfare Funds, bears witness in the following lines:

"There are certain short-comings in the operation of Welfare Funds and Federations, which should be mentioned. It is contended that many Welfare Funds suffer from a lack of democratic government. A charge is made that the Central Federation ruling body is entirely controlled by the original sponsors who tend to become self-perpetuating, and by the views of the big givers upon whom the Welfare Fund is largely dependent for support; another contention is that the Welfare Fund tends to estrange the contributor from direct interest in the individual agency."

The use of the word "contention" is of course an attempt on the part of the national sponsors of the all-inclusive Federation idea to present the fundamental short-comings of this institution in as mild a light as possible.

Mr. Ira M. Younker, in a speech delivered at the St. Louis Conference of the Federations, on January 26, 1936, is much more outspoken in his characterization of the Federations. "Money," Mr. Younker stated, "is raised by the activities of group leaders. The rank and file of contributors naturally follow these lay-leaders who have demonstrated personal success and have wealth and who, above all else, *desire not to upset the status quo.* The very structure of Federations prevents adjustment or change." Mr. Younker's program for the reform of the Federations, consists of the following: "First of all the new leadership must be composed of a small group. This group must be independent. This group must think of itself both as citizens and as Jews and must weigh each act from these two points of view." Whether with the present makeup of the Federations, or with the "small independent group" in the lead, the situation presents itself as follows:

There are in a given community a number of Jewish groups, local branches of national movements, with clearly defined national aims. There are the various groups of the Zionist movement, from the Orthodox Mizrahi to Socialist-Zionism. There is a group sponsoring the American Jewish Congress. There may be groups sponsoring Jewish cultural institutions with a clear national background. All of these, whether their field of activity be national or local, are in need of funds. All of them conduct campaigns from time to time. All of them employ their campaigns as a means of spreading their ideas. These various campaigns are to merge into one, under the leadership of the local Fed-

eration or Welfare Fund,—practically the "small independent group"—which is not only to strengthen its authority as the fund-raising body in the given community, but also to be in control in the apportionment of the total funds raised for the various movements. Very often the leaders of the Federations are opposed in spirit to the very movements which place themselves under their protective wing. The very ideas propagated by these movements are objectionable to them. Consequently the national movements do not only submit to a control by those who are bent upon squelching them, but they also submit to the limitation of their propaganda-efforts and the furthering of their ideology among the mass of the people. Instead of becoming a medium for developing national Jewish self-consciousness and leading toward a spiritual integration of Jewish life, the Community Council formed under the leadership of the philanthropic idea would quite obviously lead in the opposite direction.

III

There was a time when *giving* was the only common denominator among all groups in American Jewry, and our chief needs recognized by everyone were of a purely monetary nature. Money was needed for the upkeep of philanthropic institutions in every locality, for maintaining national philanthropic institutions, for relief of the War sufferers abroad, for the rebuilding of the Jewish National Home. Our attitude toward all these needs expressed itself in one word—giving, and giving was the chief Jewish function of American Jewry.

That period has passed. Alongside with the financial needs there developed the far greater need for self-protection, which includes: the struggle for Jewish safety in countries of Jewish persecution; the safeguarding of Jewish rights in countries where they are endangered; the protection of our civic and economic equality in this very country; the battle with growing anti-Semitism; reconstruction along economic and cultural lines; the creation of new forms of communal life to help maintain our historic continuity as a people, and finally, the building of the individual Jewish personality spiritually fortified to meet all eventualities.

Of course, all these needs classified under one broad conception of self-protection, require financial support. Under normal governments, it is the Ministry of Finance whose function it is to supply the funds needed for the diplomatic, social and all other needs of the government. No Ministry of Finance would presume, however, that owing to its function to supply the funds needed by all the other branches of the government, it is to dictate the policies of all the other branches, and become the dictator of the spiritual life of the people.

By various circumstances our philanthropy has been placed in the position of a Ministry of Finance. As such it can have no claim upon all the other functions of our national life, regardless of whether it does supply its needs. Especially so, since that "Ministry of Finance" is dominated by a spirit which regards all the other functions of our national life as superfluous and damaging. The attitude of that "Ministry of Finance" towards the ideas of national reconstruction, of democratic management of Jewish affairs, of open and courageous Jewish diplomacy, has manifested itself so often that there is no need to emphasize it here.

What the American Jewish Congress proposes is the establishment of Community Councils, not for the purpose of competing with our national and local "Ministries of Finance," but for the purpose of taking over all those numerous functions of self-defense which in no case fall under the jurisdiction of that "Ministry." These are to be councils composed of democratically chosen representatives of all Jewish groups in a given locality. The number of delegates of each group in the council is to represent the numerical strength of that group in the given com-

munity. Each organization is entitled to one delegate for every 50 members. The Council is to elect its Administrative and Executive Committee to conduct its affairs between annual sessions. The Executive Committee is to meet once every month. The Council is to finance itself by dues imposed upon the local organizations affiliated with it; these dues being sufficiently low as not to burden the affiliated organizations.

The aim of the regulations imposed by the Constitution of the Community Councils, is to make the participation in these Councils easily accessible to every Jewish group, and to develop a sense of communal responsibility in the widest circles of the Jewish population. The regulations provide not only for the democratic form of the elections of delegates to the Council, but also for the democratic conduct of every organ of the Council.

The purpose of the Councils is twofold: first, to be the local organ of the American Jewish Congress in its national and international endeavors, and second, to be the central organ for all local activities that belong to the function of self-defense in its widest meaning. In the first category are the general aims of the American Jewish Congress, which are summarized thus:

a) To safeguard the civil, political, economic and religious rights of the Jews in all countries.

b) to further the development of the Jewish National Home in Palestine.

c) To develop an articulate, intelligent, widespread and compelling public opinion on Jewish problems and interests.

d) To secure and maintain equality of opportunity for Jews everywhere.

e) To promote proper cooperation and coordination in all Jewish endeavor conceived in a spirit of self-help, self-expression and self-determination.

In the present moment, the activities of the Council, dealing with the first category, would include: the anti-Nazi fight in all its forms, particularly the boycott of Nazi goods and services; participation in the national campaign against the growing menace of anti-Semitism; participation in the World Jewish Congress; participation in the upbuilding of the Jewish National Home; participation in all other efforts of the American Jewish Congress to protect the rights of the Jewish people wherever they may be endangered.

Under the second category would fall the following activities:

a) Dealing with local cases of economic and other discriminations against Jews.

b) Study of the economic Jewish situation and the establishment of agencies for the strengthening of the Jewish economic position.

c) Combating local manifestations of anti-Semitism.

d) Cooperation with agencies for the mutual understanding between the Jewish and non-Jewish population.

e) Raising the standard of Jewish cultural life.

f) Promoting the general idea of Jewish education without interfering with the education programs of one or another group.

All these activities are to be conducted in the spirit of the declaration issued at the last annual convention of the American Jewish Congress in Philadelphia in 1935. This declaration says in part:

"Determined as Jews to protect our fullest rights here in America as elsewhere, which rights include complete freedom to pursue as a group and not solely as individuals the historic aims and aspirations of our people, we are undisturbed either by the fears of unjust suspicion from without our ranks or of delusions within, based upon false notions of patriotism. Feeling profoundly that we share in the destiny of the Jewish people, we claim for ourselves the right to the highest devotion to its interests.

"We, as American Jews, are profoundly

interested and deeply concerned in the welfare of our Jewish people wherever they may live. We are bound together with them and share to the fullest extent their trials and misfortunes. Our relationship towards them is animated not merely by humanitarian sympathies or by a community of religious faith, or by what is currently known as "philanthropy," but rather by the deep sense of Jewish solidarity and the profound conviction that the life and suffering of another part of our people as Jews are common to all of us.

"We shall combat all influences which are directed to weaken these bonds of unity and sympathy. We shall continue to be engaged in enterprises which will defend Jewish rights and reconstruct Jewish cultural and economic life throughout the world on a more wholesome basis."

IV

The American Jewish Congress realizes that the Community Councils thus created are in their own way only a step in the development of Jewish communal life in this country. Most of the institutions now functioning in Jewish communities were established through the initiative of private groups. Even when united in certain purposes, as in the case of the Federations, many of them still rely chiefly on the groups primarily interested in them. The support of various institutions provides activities for certain groups that find in these activities a justification for their existence, and would not give them up. This too is a natural outgrowth of our development in this country. The number of institutions has grown with the increase in Jewish population, and the needs of that population. The activities of these institutions helped the immigrants of yesterday to discover their social use in their new surroundings, and gave them a place in the life of the community. Even now, the time is not yet ripe to ask those groups to give up their particular interests and surrender them to the rule of the community. More than one generation is required to develop the communal spirit to such a degree as would compel each private group to merge its own interests with those of the entire community.

No forceful action can hasten this natural development in our communal psychology. No amount of propaganda can possibly be expected to establish in a short time in this country the integrated Jewish Kehillah of former centuries and of the lands where we lived for many generations. What we hope to accomplish at the present time is the utilization of the urge for self-defense and self-organization, the preparation of the framework of communal organization, the creation of the functions which may multiply with the growing realization of their importance in the future development of our life. This is to be the historic part to be played by these Communty Councils: to coordinate Jewish effort through the democratic participation of all Jewish elements, and to serve as a school for the building of more fundamental forms of democratically integrated Jewish Kehillot.

The Tangible Background of Hebrew Life

By Joshua Starr*

THERE is a halo of romance over the remote beginnings of the Jewish nation, and because of it, the task of clarifying them has attracted a host of gifted scholarly minds. The effect of their work has not been, as the fundamentalists feared, that the modern world now sets a lower value on the Hebrew factor in its culture; it is rather that the development of that ancient civilization is now better understood, in accepted historical terms. Thus, it is a commonplace with us that the picture of the Biblical period, like all others, is subject to constant filling in and revision as new materials and fresh insight demand. In the genesis and fulfillment of this dynamic outlook on past history no small role has been played by the archaeologists who have dug in Palestine and the neighboring lands, and interpreted the findings.

As an outstanding member of that select band, Dr. William F. Albright of Johns Hopkins University has been tirelessly exploring and excavating historic sites in Palestine for the past fifteen years. Not content with mastering the whole literature on the ancient Orient and adding to it a stream of articles and monographs, inincluding several in Hebrew, which in extent and importance are incredible for a man in his early forties, he has continually compared notes with his European and Palestinian colleagues in person. And now for the benefit of Bible students he has summarized his personal work and that of his predecessors and contemporaries in a rich little book.**

In order to get the proper perspective it will be helpful to look backward to a century ago when Edward Robinson, an American professor of Bible, awoke to the realization that he was teaching his subjects in a vacuum due to the lack of a map of Palestine. This led him to hit upon the novel idea of going to that land for the purpose of seeing where the ancient towns stood, their resources, their relative size, strategic position, and the like. In his two trips his efforts to bring the Book back to earth succeeded as few pioneer undertakings ever do. It was he who blazed the path for a whole galaxy of explorers and archaeologists, who proceeded to survey and exacavate the remains of every period from the dawn of human life to the age of the Crusaders. It was inevitable that among these persons some should have been treasure-hunters pure and simple, others well-meaning but incompetent. Yet the bulk of the work showed steady progress in the technique of unearthing buried objects and structures without irreparable damage or disturbance of the all-important chronological sequence. The chequered story of this advance is the subject of Prof. Albright's opening chapter.

The greatest of living field archaeologists, Sir Flinders Petrie, still active at the age of eighty-five, is the Columbus of scientific digging in Palestine. About forty years ago he took time out of his brilliant work in Egypt and achieved a rather undesirable notoriety because of his strange attachment to those innumerable earthenware fragments which lie strewn over the ruined mounds of Palestine. These sherds, bearing not so much as an intelligible scratch on them, are, as any field-worker will confess, easily the world's most boring objects. Yet, claimed Petrie, they can and must be classified, described in detail and arranged according to their proper age! His contemporaries lost no op-

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**"The Archaeology of Palestine and the Bible." 3rd edition, Fleming H. Revell Co., New York.

portunity to ridicule or politely overlook this "crackpot science," while he busied himself in excavation, carefully examining and recording the great variety of whole and fragmentary ceramic materials found at each successive level. Then in the teeth of the most sceptical, he demonstrated that sherds can be dated by a practiced eye, and since that day those unattractive fragments have been the excavator's indispensable guides. Visiting an expedition at work in Palestine today the unsuspecting tourist will be rather puzzled to find the native laborers carefully picking all sherds out of the debris and putting them in designated baskets. Then the members of the staff devote their valuable time to sorting these many fragments, in order to select those which shall be drawn to scale and photographed. This may seem to have very little to do with history or Bible, yet these intrinsically valueless sherds are the chief clues to the dating of the tools, the temples, the fortifications, and all other traces of life in Biblical times.

The importance of Petrie's discovery and its later refinement has come home with great force during the past year, when messages in Biblical Hebrew were found inscribed in ink on sherds at Lachish, a fortified city in southern Palestine. The preliminary studies of Prof. Harry Torczyner of the Hebrew University and of others have determined that these communications were sent during the stress of the Babylonian invasion of 599-8 B. C. E., revealing that frantic efforts were then being made to secure Egyptian assistance. It is safe to say that without the habit of examining all earthenware fragments excavators would have assigned these valuable documents to the dump. Nor should it be forgotten that in 1927, before the mound of Tell Duweir was known to be the ruins of Lachish, Dr. Albright identified it, with the combined aid of the Biblical indications and the sherds which he picked up on its surface.

In order to assist the reader in visualizing how systematic exacavation is conducted, the author in his second chapter wisely avoids generalities. In their stead he describes step by step the series of four campaigns which he recently directed at a mound in the southeastern part of the country, which is either ancient Kiryath-Sepher, or another town of very similar history. His lucid narrative and description gives one the vicarious experience of witnessing the exposure of nine successive occupations, as clearly defined from one another as the parts of a layer-cake. One comes away from these pages with the feeling of having been vouchsafed intriguing glimpses of the tangible aspects of life in a provincial Biblical city, from its beginning in Abraham's day to its final destruction in the generation of Jeremiah. The emphasis is well-placed on such things as the fortifications, the sacred figurines and altars which functioned in Canaanite and Israelite religious experience, and the equipment wherewith the laboring population spun, wove, and dyed woolens.

The experience of seeing and handling antiquities is scarcely a sensible substitute for a good historical background; yet how theoretical the latter must be without the aid of the former. Think, for example, of such a commonplace activity as the pressing of grapes for wine in ancient Palestine. What image does that call up when we read of it in a historical context? In all likelihood either none or something quite anachronistic. Dr. Albright is ever on the lookout to banish such fuzziness. The present writer remembers a typical incident when that scholar led a group of his students one day up a hillside in Judah en route to an excavation, and by chance his observant eye lit upon a sloping area of exposed rock. He made us detour in order to have a good look at this broad, shallow depression, from which we found two channels leading down to deeper pits. Spontaneously a feature of Biblical life took on concrete form: we were all in a position to visualize the Hebrews treading

the fruit, still so abundantly grown in the country, and later drawing up the fermented juice and storing it in jars of known shapes and sizes. It is this type of contribution to our education that the middle section of this book offers.

The third and final chapter sums up the relation of the new materials, both written and otherwise, to Biblical literature and history. The author has chosen to limit himself to certain well-selected phases: the historical value of the saga of the Patriarchs, the emergence of the Mosaic cult and its legislation, and the obscure period following the destruction of the Temple. Naturally it requires no great enthusiasm for the technical details of archaeology for one to derive both enjoyment and profit from these pages. Nowhere else will the interested reader find these particular topics discussed with such concreteness by a scholar who leads him so surefootedly beyond the usual literary standpoint. Dr. Albright is never content to analyze a unit of source-material only in terms of its plausibility and consistency with related passages. Indeed it is at that point that his contribution begins. With specific purpose in mind he has visited all the places mentioned in his discussion, and he has neglected no opportunity to trace the cultural affinities of a multitude of objects found by excavators, as well as those of the social practices of the Hebrews. In bringing this first-hand information to bear on his text he cannot of course always be reasonably certain of his conclusions, but he does scrupulously refrain from distorting a situation in the interests of a pet theory. If he may in general be characterized as an opponent of the "higher criticism" of the past generation, that does not prevent him from employing the word "saga" to denote narratives traditionally accredited as bald fact, nor is he constrained to harmonize existent anachronisms and inconsistencies in the texts.

In a generation like ours which has made a definite break with the military and literary emphases of the old history, a historian need offer no apology for discussing such unconventional matters as the beer-jugs of the Philistines or the toys with which Israelite children played. (Dr. Albright's explanation *ex cathedra* as to why that beverage required strainers had to be omitted, as undoubtedly too jolly for a serious book.) For without such precepts it is plain that many of our concepts in the realm of history must be desolately empty. Even the dimentions of city-walls are vital to the subject. For when Dr. Albright measures the walls of various towns and finds that after the Hebrew settlement they were rebuilt on a narrower scale, he confronts us with "a complete change in social organization"—from the corvée of the Canaanite city-state to the free labor of the sons of nomads. From personal observation and participation the writer may allude to results of similar tenor obtained by the digging of Bethel in the summer of 1934, under the direction of our author. Here in the course of several weeks' work it was possible to study first the level dating at the time of the Judges (Iron I), which yielded crude stone structures and rough pottery such as only inexperienced artisans, recent arrivals from the desert, would be guilty of. Then immediately below the black debris of a conflagration came the vivid contrast of the ruins of sturdily built Canaanite dwellings and fortifications, carefully provided with well-plastered drains, and containing ceramic objects of obviously superior workmanship, typical of the so-called Late Bronze Age. For any one to whom such laboratory exercises are significant, Dr. Albright's volume is required reading. In a field in which the production of popular and semi-popular works goes on at a furious and disconcerting pace, this is one of the very few which will stand the test, both of the general reader, as well as that of the advanced student.

Correspondence

To the Editor:

I want to register very definite protest against your editorial "Zionism and the Communists" in the March 6th issue. You suggest creating a philosophy vis a vis the Russian Government which will dissociate itself from those who believe in revealed religion and many of the concomitants of such beief. In other words you would sell out the vast numbers of Jews within and near Russia on the basis of your own differing religious views. In my mind nothing can be more explicit an example of what Milton Steinberg says so well on page 10 of the same issue: "Thus it comes to pass that the Jew stands before the world pointing an accusing finger at his fellows, hoping that the Gentiles will dissociate him from other Jews, that they will observe that he at least is "different" in his freedom from those traits which make Jews generally obnoxious." If the word "treason" still has some content in our liberal pacifist days, you are guilty of it towards a large portion of the Jewish people.

Surely no philosophy of the Jewish position to be presented officially to the non-Jewish world may dare to build on the pet *pilpul* of any group. No preferential position may be claimed for any group in a serious defense of the whole Jewish people. The condemnation every sane Jew uttered upon those of our people who in Germany held Ostjuden up to scorn applies as well to your thesis. *Sh'or Yashuv* is a principle that only a prophet speaking for God may utter. A *pashuter boser v'dom* worrying over a serious problem dare not aim to save only "modern Jews."

The older Jewish answer to the Communists that our religion must not be confused with a corrupt Orthodox Church as having opiate effects may be treason to orthodox Leninism, but at least it is not to Orthodox Jewry. You might apply Judah Halevi's words to yourself—*"Kavanatcho rezuyia aval maasech ainom rezuyim."* Or the Dante version, which is more pungent, about which road good intentions pave.

(Rabbi) Manuel Laderman

Denver, Col.
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